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SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO AND AF/S
NSC FOR SR AFRICA ADVISER JENDAYII FRAZER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: HOW MUCH GIVE IN ZANU-PF OPENNESS TO DIALOGUE

REF: A. (A) HARARE 1475

[B.](#) (B) HARARE 1491

[C.](#) (C) HARARE 1506

Classified By: JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN FOR REASON 1.5D

1.(C) Most Zimbabweans appear to have welcomed the signs of openness to dialogue reflected in the MDC's attendance at President Mugabe's July 22 speech to parliament (ref A). MDC spokesmen have remained on message about their hopes that the gesture would open the way for serious dialogue between the parties to address the national crisis, despite the July 22 arrest (for several hours) of MDC spokesman Paul Themba-Nyati over an MDC caricature of President Mugabe and despite impediments posed to registration of some MDC local government candidates(ref B). President Mugabe's speech to the Parliament(ref C) was relatively restrained, but highly unrealistic. Then at a later luncheon speech that day to some parliamentarians and others, Mugabe was somewhat more explicit about his pleasure that MDC had attended the parliamentary session and his hope that ZANU-PF and MDC would work together in parliament.

2.(U) The state media net also went into overdrive, lauding the signs of national reconciliation. Even the usually acid-tongued ZANU-PF International Secretary Didymus Mutasa said that it would be important for the two parties to work together to find an economic way forward. He did not object to the MDC maintaining its lawsuit against the conduct of the 2002 presidential election, but he called for the MDC to secure "from its handlers" the removal of economic sanctions against Zimbabwe" and rejected the MDC's statement that they would seek an honorable exit for President Mugabe. State media on July 24 picked up the theme that the MDC must demonstrate its patriotism by securing an end to sanctions against Zimbabwe, while Information Minister Jonathan Moyo diverted from the mostly conciliatory tone by labeling the MDC a "hitherto treasonous party" which must stop "sabotaging the economy" and claiming that the public is "tired of MDC lies and hallucinations."

3.(C) Comment: It is too early to tell with what sincerity ZANU-PF is approaching the putative reconciliation with MDC. As a minimum, ZANU-PF wished to secure MDC's attendance in parliament to provide the show of honor which means so much to Mugabe. The Mugabe Government also wished to alleviate some of the pressure it was under from South Africa and others to enter into dialogue with the MDC. ZANU would also like MDC to share the responsibility for the economic hardships the populace is facing and, ideally, to use their international ties to relieve the pressure on Zimbabwe. At this point, we are dubious that ZANU intends to give the MDC a genuine share of power or to enter into the sort of dialogue which addresses the serious issues of Mugabe's legitimacy and seeks a consensus formula for addressing the issue. This tentative judgment could change depending on the amount of external pressure Mugabe comes under, particularly from President Mbeki who has been lionized of late in the state media for his advocacy of "African solutions to African problems" and alleged resistance to American and British impositions. The rapidly unraveling economic situation will also put additional pressures on the GOZ, next when Zimbabweans are unable to access the salary deposits made in their bank accounts at the end of the month. (Bankers told us yesterday told us they feared that riots could break out when the currency shortage hits even harder with the increased and unmeetable demand for cash from account holders after end-month salary deposits.)

SULLIVAN